

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPING
THE
"TRAIL OF TEARS"**

**County Participation in a Regional Design
for the Upper Hiwassee Valley**

A Personnel Administration Intern Report

by Gary W. Blanscet

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by
Gary W. Blanscet
Southern Regional Training Program
in Public Administration

Division of Personnel
and
Office of Tributary Area Development
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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was prepared and written by Gary W. Blanscet as the result of his participation in the TVA-wide Student Intern Program administered by the Division of Personnel. The opinions, conclusions, and recommendations contained herein represent those of the writer and are not necessarily those of the Tennessee Valley Authority, nor is the accuracy of the data contained herein guaranteed by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to identify, along with an understanding of the area, a means by which a practical approach to regional cooperation among the five counties of the Upper Hiwassee watershed area could be achieved for planning and developing a proposed recreation complex from the available resources around the theme of the Cherokee Indians' Trail of Tears; and to record the counties' responses, insights, recommendations, and suggestions on such an approach as presented to them. It is hoped that the groundwork laid here can be a definite tool in aiding the progress of beginning such regional recreation development by TVA and the five individual counties.

The Upper Hiwassee Watershed Development Association area, comprised of Cherokee and Clay Counties of North Carolina, and Towns, Union, and Fannin Counties of north Georgia, is a land of comparative isolation midway between five metropolitan cities. At its nearest point, the five-county area is only 50 air miles from Knoxville, 40 miles from Chattanooga, and 75 miles from Atlanta, Asheville, and Greenville. This area, while sparsely populated, is within about two hours' travel time of more than two million city dwellers. There are already highway connections from the region to each of these peripheral cities, and these arteries are being somewhat improved under the Appalachia program. And, of course, in these cities are interstate highways, airlines, and major rail links to all parts of the Southeast and the Nation.¹

As much as this region has to offer in abundant scenic mountain beauty, the vast water resources for boating and fishing, camping facilities, and plentiful national forests, the region has failed in the past to recognize its yet untapped potential and to accept the tourist and recreation industry as a viable means to

economic growth. The area has not become an established tourist destination on a large-scale basis, and the region remains largely undeveloped because of that past attitude. Only now are the people of the region realizing that the tourist industry can play a significant role in their economy. To a limited extent, due to isolated attempts on behalf of individual counties, some token success in this industry has been noted, primarily in the form of county fairs, camping and fishing resources, and a smattering of county recreational parks.

The Upper Hiwassee Valley is and can be more of an important tourist area for vacationists from the South. It provides the nearest concentration of several recreation resources for many persons from Atlanta and other nearby population centers, especially from the State of Florida and from the coastal regions of South Carolina and southeastern North Carolina. This fact is supported by recent origin-of-visitor studies conducted by the highway departments of Georgia and North Carolina. In this valley, many visitors from these areas find the nearest opportunities for scenic vistas, for mountain atmosphere, and for trout fishing. Here they also find a concentration of fresh water lakes with opportunities for a great variety of water recreation activities and public outdoor recreation facilities.² Surprising as it may seem, market studies indicate that the second-most potential market attractiveness of the region is from the New York and other Northeastern metropolitan areas of the United States³; so theory, at least, points to the fact that a market could exist if the development were there.

Historically, the problem has been this: In plans for area development the recreation industry is sometimes regarded as a sideline, a means of supplementing such basic job producers as manufacturing, forestry, agriculture, and minerals industries. Reasons for the subordinate importance frequently given to

the tourist and recreation industry have a wide range of scope:

1. Jobs in the industry tend to be seasonal and wages are often low.
2. A broad capital outlay is generally required to finance such operations.
3. The recreationist's changing tastes are oftentimes a deterrent to long-range, large-scale capital investment.

Certainly such points should be considered by the governing authorities within the Upper Hiwassee Valley, but they should be weighed in the proper perspective that our modern era has now produced:

1. The Upper Hiwassee area has some definite advantages over other areas in its basic recreation resources.
2. Development of recreation industries, if well conceived, could aid in the development of forest, agriculture, water, manufacturing, mineral, and institutional resources, thereby helping to promote a comprehensive development program for the entire area as well as shouldering the major burden of any ecological movement.⁴

Examples can be briefly noted of how recreation developments are capable of having multiple-purpose values. Highway improvements that are part of a recreation program would benefit all sectors of the economy as well as provide improved access to recreation sites. New water resource developments could include recreation benefits in addition to flood control, water supply, fish and wildlife improvements, and electric power. Plans for recreation could lead to better managed and more productive forests, provide local markets for agriculture truck crops and forest products, and offer incentives for providing better sources of government. Changes in governmental and business services to accommodate recreation industries could serve also as inducements to the location of new manufacturing plants. Training for jobs serving travelers could lead to vocational training on a much broader front.⁵ In short, a dynamic recreation industry could help attract capital, build labor skills, open new markets, and improve accessibility in ways beneficial to all sectors of resource development.

These kinds of development will not only serve tourists but reach across the area's entire economic spectrum.⁶

Although the people of the Upper Hiwassee Valley are beginning to grasp a feeling of the importance of tourism and recreation, it is still necessary to impress upon them the equally important value of regional cooperation in beginning a conscientious, purposeful planning effort to effectively develop local resources. Regionalism has several very basic advantages, primary of which is the ability of several counties to do as a group what each could not do for itself. For example, the very fact that several counties in a region are united in a single goal or purpose sparks the attention of state government. State governments are usually more willing to provide financial assistance to groups of counties much more quickly and positively than to any one county meekly seeking that same aid. As more people within the state are involved and affected by a proposal for a particular area involving state money, the state will react more positively to requests for that assistance. Extend this example across state lines, and there appear to be advantages of additional aid from each additional state included in the process as well as action from the federal government. Also, any financial necessities which still must be borne by the counties can be divided among the several counties. Thus, there is a definite financial advantage involved in regionalism; in this age, with public monies so difficult to obtain, about the only way to compete for funds is through a regional approach demonstrating the "most good for the most people."

In addition to financial assistance, regional action which gains the attention of state and federal governments also frequently invites its share of offers for helpful technical assistance. Oftentimes the technical assistance and expertise which is necessary for the drawing of actual plans is a dreaded necessary expense

of a county attempting to begin construction. But cooperation on a particular project can benefit the counties within the region with sound state and federal technical aid.

Finally, the type of recreational planning being discussed here also invites unlimited private investment opportunities. Desirable and effective private recreation development depends upon a substantial amount of public enthusiasm for the project, enthusiasm which is widely enough displayed to grab the attention of investors. A united regional enthusiasm would be the kind to interest private developers, sufficient to guarantee the worthiness of the speculation wherein a profitable return can be expected. The first step toward public enthusiasm of this magnitude is, of course, individual county government sanction of recreation as a regional industry. The county government must indicate solid backing of the proposal and offer its individual support to the region for the program. Once again, rather than just one county or one locale within a county working toward some goal, private developers should be alerted to profitable investment opportunities in a regional, multi-county work effort.

There have been those people, both inside and outside the region, who have asked, "Why the 'Trail of Tears' as a recreational and tourist development theme?" The most sorrowful eviction of a people that the United States has ever known occurred in 1838. The Cherokees took their long, last look at the blue mountains and began, with slow, melancholy steps, a wilderness march to an unknown territory 800 miles away. The desolation and the heartbreak of that march have become an imperishable memory to Indians and white men alike.⁷ The beginning point of the travel route, several of the structures used in the collection of the Cherokees, and other artifacts of the Cherokee culture and removal are present within the boundaries of the Upper Hiwassee Valley. The

historical importance of enshrining and remembering evidences of the Cherokee relocation was suggested as early as 1928, when it was written:

There are . . . Cherokee graves that our Anglo-Saxon people should not allow to pass into oblivion. It is the only possible courtesy of a refined and belated penitence to a wronged people whose homes we possess. The old Council House at Red Clay still stands, but in hopeless decay. A marker on the spot should be set to keep it in memory. The stately Vann residence at Spring Place is touched with dilapidation. Surely the high spirited citizens of northern Georgia can be relied on to guard this worthy shrine. The venerable log house, the home of the Rosses, at Ross' Gap is another sacred memorial that should not be allowed to perish. It is understood that the noble Daughters of the American Revolution are committed to its preservation, and that fact carries meanings at once creditable and intensely gratifying.

The Trail of Tears is that common thread which ties the counties of the region together. The Cherokee history and the sorrowful fate of that tribe which began in the valley is that major link giving a kinship between Towns County, Georgia, and Cherokee County, North Carolina; between Clay County and Fannin County; between Union County and Fannin, and back to Towns County. In spite of what the counties may have long believed, there does breathe a sisterhood of existence among them, an interdependence on at least this one point: the fitting together of the separate pieces of the puzzle picturing the historical Trail of Tears. From this historical kinship, tourist attractions and recreation facilities can be developed for America to see and to experience on a large scale rather than for drifters to just happen upon several individually insignificant, incomplete smatterings of historical remains and recreational attempts.

It has been suggested by at least one person that reminding America of its painfully dreadful experience with the Cherokees in this area by developing around the Trail of Tears theme is like the Nazis in Germany revitalizing Jewish concentration camps in order to remind the Germans of their World War II experience with the Jews. It is supposed that the Trail of Tears would not thrive because Americans want to forget such unfortunate historical experiences. How-

ever, there are evidences which indicate the opposite:

1. All segments of Civil War history, truly a tragic episode for Americans regardless of whether Northern or Southern loyalties are held, are frequently visited and viewed for their curious historical value. Whether they be battlegrounds or troop commander headquarters, graveyards or hideouts, Civil War remains that are sufficiently developed have a strong magnetic attraction for the tourist and recreationist. The "Cyclorama" in Atlanta is a good example of this tourist magnetism.
2. At least one segment of the Trail of Tears that has been developed, the amphitheatre production "Unto These Hills," has proved to be one of the more significant tourist attractions for the area and sustains a tremendous economic influence upon the town of Cherokee, North Carolina.

It would appear, then, that there is every reason to expect that a combined, conscientious planning and development effort centered around the Trail of Tears theme could indeed be productive for the Upper Hiwassee Valley.

THE PLANNING PROPOSAL

Planning and Developing the "Trail of Tears" - County Participation in a Regional Design

In an organizational effort, key public officials in each of the five counties of the Upper Hiwassee Valley were contacted about the idea of developing a tourist and recreation complex around the Trail of Tears theme, and were presented with this proposal as a means to initiate regional planning action. The purpose in presenting this proposal rather than any other was merely a gesture to determine its suitability among counties within the region in terms of practicality, ease of initiation, and ease of administrative control. The counties' interest in the recreation project, coupled with their ability to suitably identify proper planning methods, is of paramount importance in determining the overall success of initiating any regional recreation scheme for the valley.

This proposal for a plan of action depends upon a foundation arrangement of County Trail of Tears Development Associations set up within each county of the region. These associations are nonlegal insofar as incorporation into the existing county government structures is concerned. They are set up solely for the planning and development of the Trail of Tears within the immediate area. These county associations would not be confused with existing legal county planning boards, and their function should not be given to any existing planning boards--the planning and development of the Trail of Tears should be handled by a body whose sole purpose is in planning and developing the Trail of Tears into a regional recreation attraction. This is not to say, however, that existing planning boards should not be allowed to assist or participate in any way; it merely means that an association set up independently of these county planning

board will have only one project to concern itself with rather than a multitude of diverse projects that could divert attention away from the development of the Trail of Tears.

It is important at this time to note two things: (1) In order to gain effective community support, a planning scheme for the Trail of Tears must primarily involve community volunteers rather than elected officials, and (2) to be effective, a planning group such as the Trail of Tears Development Association must not be so large as to choke itself with such duties as meeting announcements and getting all attendants together at one time. It is suggested that the chief administrator of each of the five counties of the Upper Hiwassee region appoint five members to their County Trail of Tears Development Association, one of whom is the county engineer, one who represents the chief legislative body of the county, and three citizens of the county (each from a different town, if possible) who are sufficiently knowledgeable of county conditions and trends to adequately represent the general townsfolk.

The purpose of this grass roots organization is fourfold:

1. It is a convenient way to involve local citizens and governments in the recreational planning and development of the Trail of Tears.
2. It allows county governments to devote a full interest in that specific planning and development.
3. Decisions based on the final actions for development will have been based on county recommendations from these development associations.
4. To be noted later, the implementation of the final plans of action will rest with these individual Trail of Tears Development Associations.

These county associations will be the sources of initial recommendations of action for developing the Trail of Tears and will be concerned with such considerations as:

1. What does this county have to offer the tourist?
2. How can we incorporate the Trail of Tears theme into existing facilities?
3. What historical segment of the Indian history is available here?
4. What is the best single recreational advantage that our county can offer?
5. How can we incorporate this recreational advantage into a planned development of additional facilities in our county which will spotlight the Trail of Tears as its theme?

When it becomes necessary, the county associations will be most helpful in assuming the responsibility of promoting the Trail of Tears in their counties and region. Important at the present, they must be willing to utilize their local news media to keep the public informed of the progress being made in all phases of the Trail of Tears planning scheme. Hopefully, constant public awareness will lead to constant public support.

Five individual county development associations necessitate a higher association to direct the planning of each county into the desired regional planning effort. This higher association is the Upper Hiwassee Regional Trail of Tears Development Association. This association will serve as a clearinghouse of all county ideas and will be authorized to receive and study the counties' plans for their local Trail of Tears development in order to ensure that development will be made in the best interests of regionalism. It is with this association that regional planning originates. As a result of this association each county can depend on overall development efforts not being so drastically duplicated as to defeat the goal for improvement. This Regional Trail of Tears Development Association will be composed of seven members: one county Trail of Tears association member from each of the five counties, and the two representatives of the Upper Hiwassee who will also serve on a steering committee now being formed by TVA through its Office of Tributary Area Development. As previously mentioned, the direct responsibility of the regional association will be to

coordinate individual county efforts into a regionalized drive. For instance, how can County A's facilities and recreational potential augment what County B has to offer? What changes or rearrangements can be feasibly made in one county's recreational design for the Trail of Tears which will avoid duplication by another? With representatives of the counties as members of the commission, it should be easier for each county to understand how it may best change, if necessary, within its limits to be able to make a significant contribution to the overall project.

The very idea of planning the development of the Trail of Tears on a regional basis presumes that the region must utilize its resources, including its land, to the fullest advantage. Here is where both the regional association and the individual county development associations shine in importance: The regional association, as represented by the separate counties, recommends ways in which the counties must utilize their land for developing their recreation facilities along the Trail of Tears theme. Through these representatives the counties are individually allowed to agree or disagree on the land use proposals. Disagreements may be appealed to and resolved by the regional commission. It must be remembered that community planning for the distribution of land uses is the right principle. Once again, it involves the communities' people and governments in constructive participation in the planning and development of the Trail of Tears.

As just briefly noted, TVA's Office of Tributary Area Development has formed a steering committee responsible for putting together an organization of overall direction of development for the Trail of Tears in a three-region area: Upper Hiwassee, Lower Hiwassee, and WACADA. Two representatives from each of these regions are now serving on this executive committee, and they will do the necessary liaison work among the representatives of the several counties and the three involved states. Because this committee's two Upper

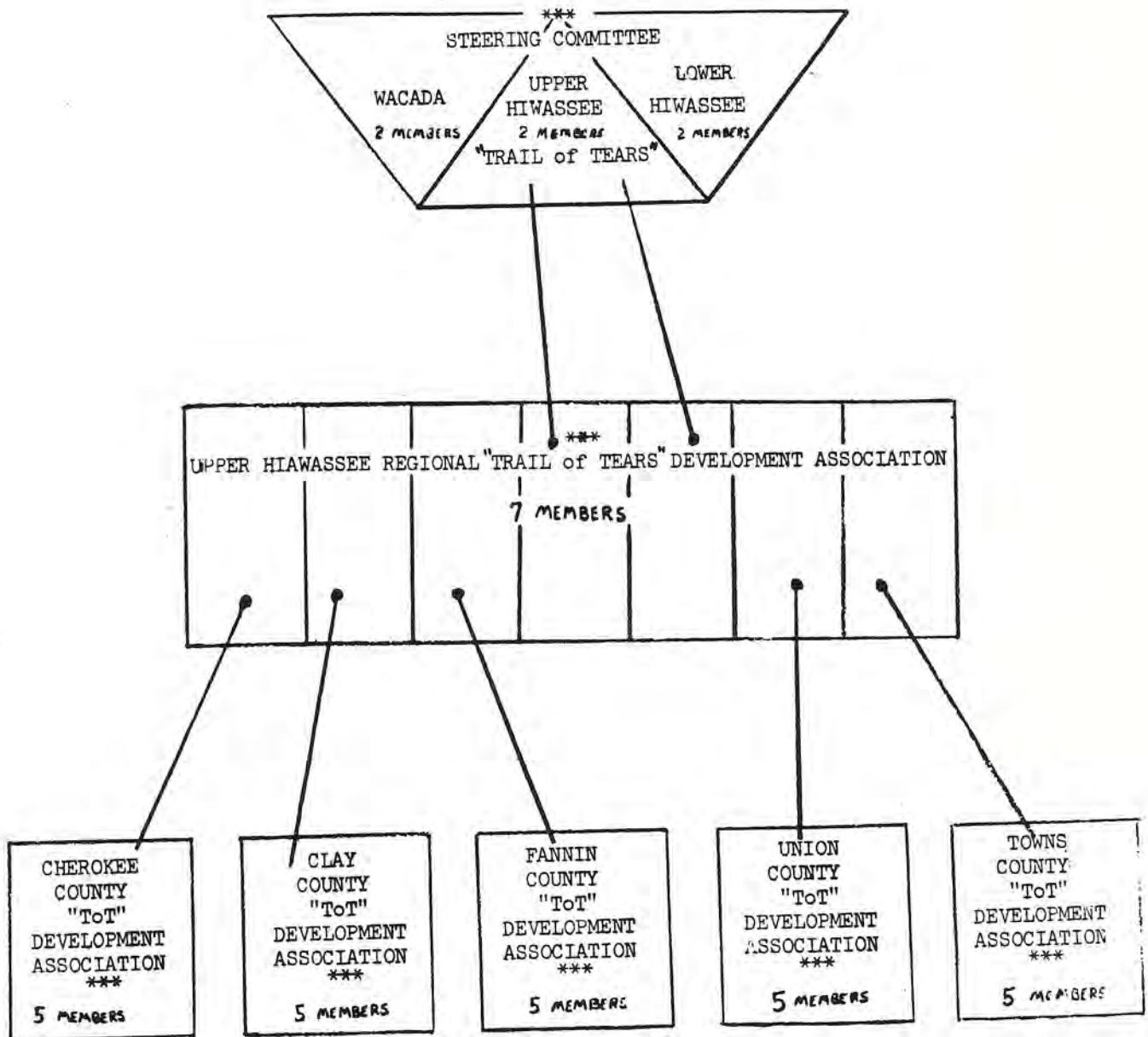
Hiwassee members will be sitting on the Upper Hiwassee Regional Trail of Tears Development Association, that steering committee will be constantly informed of local progress being made in not only local planning and development of the Trail of Tears but also progress in local interest being generated. When significant local interest has been generated over the actions taken in their area for the Trail of Tears, the steering committee will then solicit the direct help and support of the states by enlisting the aid of such state agencies as state planning boards, Georgia Mountains Planning and Development Commission, and other existing agencies deemed vital for complete incorporation of the Trail of Tears into the region.

All states involved in the Trail of Tears recreational area have planning laws providing for planning on the state, county, and municipal levels, with elastic provisions which permit the legal creation of regions--interstate as well as intrastate--with their respective state planning bodies. It will be the function of the steering committee to relieve the regional development association and the county Trail of Tears development associations of the responsibility of notifying these agencies. This can only occur after the regional and county associations have helped generate a widespread local enthusiasm for the project.

After the steering committee has enlisted necessary state support, actual implementation of the final plans of action within the counties and region becomes easier. There is no regional administrative or legislative body which can be charged to see that the plans are carried out on a regional basis; the implementation of final plans will rest with the individual counties through their Trail of Tears development associations and their individual county governments. But their jobs will be aided by the state and will be given competent direction by able state planning agencies.

One final note on the structuring of the regional Trail of Tears development association and the individual county associations: In order to productively guide the Trail of Tears planning and development efforts, a TVA planner-advisor from the Recreation Resources Branch should be a part of the regional association as an ex officio member and should be made available to each county association to offer technical advice and/or assistance on the basis of his expertise. Again, this should not be interpreted to mean that other sources of expert advice and/or interest groups which might avail themselves to the Trail of Tears planning scheme should not also be included. On the contrary, wide-range participation and assistance is a direct embodiment of meaningful planning which will subsequently guarantee positive final results for the Trail of Tears and its historic region.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART for COUNTY PARTICIPATION
in the REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT of the
TRAIL OF TEARS



*** TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE and/or ADVICE to be offered by the TVA RECREATION RESOURCES BRANCH AND other expert or interest groups available

COUNTY RESPONSES

Personal contact with key county officials was made in each county in the Upper Hiwassee Valley. At first, substantial misgivings were expressed about the future success of such a recreation program but as those officials became increasingly aware that the program drew upon the advantages of regional cooperation, an immense interest for the undertaking of the project was displayed. Several reminders were made to me that individual previous attempts toward a similar end had been unsuccessful, so perhaps the combining of efforts could be the key to successfully using the historical value of the Trail of Tears to economically helpful tourist advantage.

In general, counties in the Upper Hiwassee Valley favored the development of their currently dormant recreation and tourist attraction potential around the Trail of Tears theme. Officials in these counties favored the idea of regional cooperation and agreed to full participate, and they favored the proposal for planning action as presented to them as a suitable, practical means for initiating the planning and development effort.

Several points mentioned during our summer discussions are important to note. There does exist some intercounty antagonism due to prior efforts made in this area on cooperative projects. It does not seem insurmountable at this point. Rather, the region seems to be ready to assess its immediate needs and recognize the importance of cooperation in spite of past experiences. However, it is important to know that officials of those counties expressed some concern about previous intercounty fiascos. They have hopes that this program, if pursued, will not suffer the same disappointing results.

CONCLUSIONS

Briefly stated, TVA's general purpose in the assignment of this internship project was to identify some means whereby the local county governments of the Upper Hiwassee Valley could be effectively included in the regional planning and development structure of the Trail of Tears recreational project. The internship was not designed to suggest what actual physical arrangements and facilities could be utilized in the development stage of the project, as this is a function left first to the counties individually and finally for the counties collectively. My personal objectives for the internship were: (1) To meet with key officials in each county of the Upper Hiwassee Valley to determine whether they would be willing for the county to pursue the Trail of Tears regional recreation project, (2) to offer a suggested planning scheme for county involvement, and (3) to determine from each of the officials if the suggested planning scheme were practical for their participation. Although it was not an objective, it was hoped that the officials would make a definite commitment to actually cooperate in the project.

The basic conclusions drawn from this final report are:

1. Recreation and tourism is a vital practical source of industry for the Upper Hiwassee Valley.
2. Regional cooperation in the planning and development scheme is the most desirable means to effectuate the project.
3. There is considerable merit for capitalizing on the Trail of Tears as a recreation development theme.
4. Four of the five counties approached are greatly interested in the project, recognizing the importance of recreation as an industry,

accepting the historic value of the Trail of Tears as a common development theme, and willing to cooperate on a regional basis to begin planning the project.

5. The proposal that has been offered in this summary has been generally accepted by those four counties as a feasible planning scheme for each county's participation in the total process.
6. Two counties (Cherokee and Fannin) are beginning an immediate search for the proper personnel within their counties to staff the grass roots planning organization. Two others (Clay and Towns) are awaiting a specific request from TVA to begin.
7. All of the counties favoring the project and this proposal expressed much confidence in the fact that TVA will be in a position to greatly assist in offering technical advice and expertise. It is with this understanding that the counties feel that their efforts will be mutually worthwhile.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the basic conclusions drawn in this summary, and from personal insights drawn from this intern's field contacts, the following recommendations are made to the proper authorities of the Tennessee Valley Authority:

1. Definitely pursue the Trail of Tears recreation project in the Upper Hiwassee Valley. The initial interest is sufficiently high, and the need for such an economic lift is pressing. It should be recommended that the pursuance of this project should be immediate in that specific action is already being started by two counties and two others are ready to begin shortly. If continued action on this project is not taken by TVA, there may result a change in the basically acceptable attitude of the counties toward TVA.
2. Do follow a scheme of regional planning action either identical to the one offered here or a plan similar to the basic design. The plan outlined here has been accepted by the participating counties, and it should save time and effort for the authorities involved in officially initiating the planning and development effort. It should be noted that the proposal as presented does lend itself to probable expansion to include regions other than Upper Hiwassee which may become a part of the Trail of Tears planning scheme.
3. As the project is pursued, do not allow any participating county to back out of the planning and development commitment. Proposed actions in the past that have not been successful have created such an air of inter-county mistrust that another may cause permanent damage to bicounty or multicounty relations and cooperation for future joint endeavors. It

should be highly probable that TVA, working closely with the region in this project, could help overcome any discouragement experienced by counties which might cause one or more to want to discontinue its cooperation.

4. Encourage the county heads to staff the ground-level planning organizations with (1) at least one county official who has power to commit the county to definite action or with at least enough influence to obtain a solid commitment; (2) citizens within the county who might have a specific interest in the Trail of Tears or Cherokee Indian history, or citizens who by virtue of past action on an individual effort have attempted to revive some segment of the Cherokee history within their county. Practically every county within the Upper Hiwassee region has individuals or organizations (such as Fort Butler Association or historical societies) within their county from which to draw this type of staff.

FOOTNOTES

1. Upper Hiwassee Valley, Summary of Resources, Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville. May 1965, p. 3.
2. Ibid.
3. Appalachian Highlands Recreation Study, Phase II Market Analysis. July 1970, p. 103, Table 22.
4. UHV Loc. Cit., p. 6.
5. Ibid., p. 7.
6. Ibid., p. 8.
7. The Story of the Cherokees, Dr. W. R. L. Smith, Norfolk, Virginia: Church of God Publishing House, 1928, p. 159.
8. Ibid., p. 161-162.

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